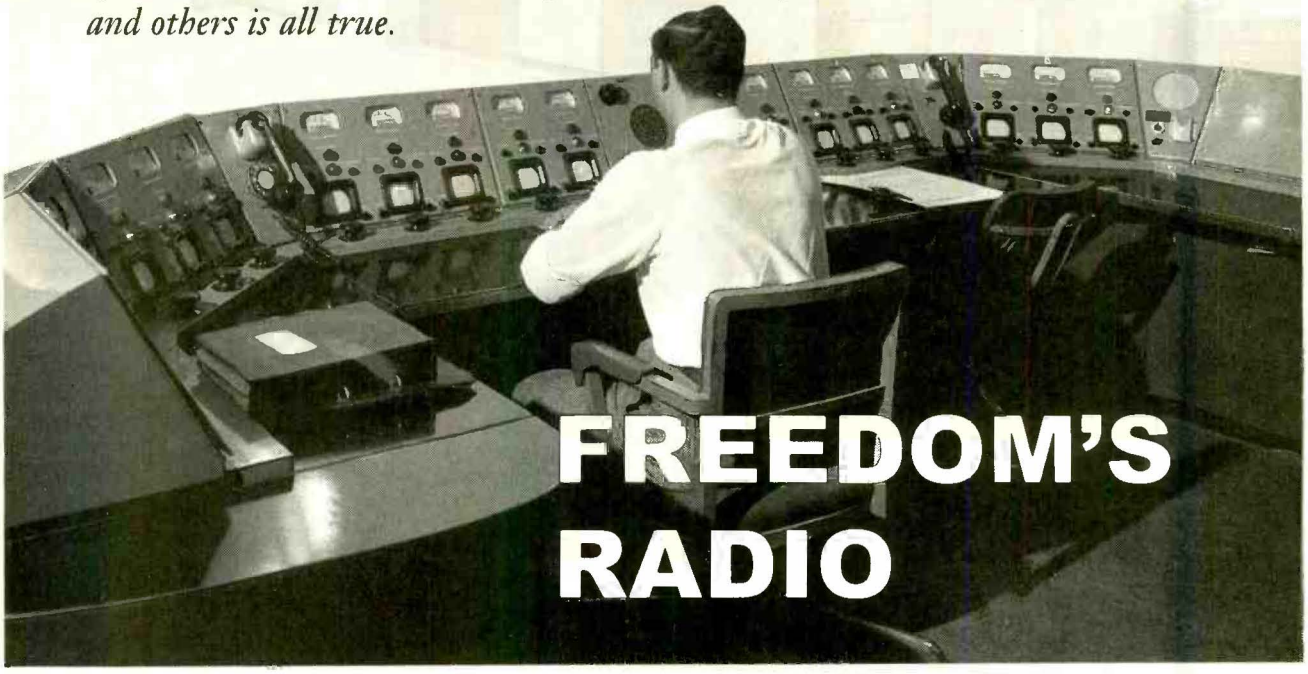
It may read like a spy novel, but the story behind operations like Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, and others is all true.

STANLEY LEINWOLL



FREEDOM'S RADIO

An era has ended: The Berlin Wall has come down, and Communism in Europe is dead. We've won the cold war! A key element in that victory was America's "black-radio" operations. In light of that, it is a bit ironic that the future of the radio operations that enhanced U.S. policy for more than four decades is in doubt.

The success of black radio—broadcast operations that were funded clandestinely by the CIA and other intelligence organizations, whose purpose was to spread discontent, in some cases to disinform, to encourage counter-revolutionary activities, and, ultimately, to free the peoples who were under the yoke of Communist tyranny—was unprecedented. With major black-radio operations long since ended, and the survival of the broadcast organizations that succeeded them in jeopardy, it is appropriate to recall the early history of those broadcast operations, including the spying and counter-spying, dirty tricks, espionage and counter-espionage, poison plots, intelligence gathering, a bombing, and at least three assassinations. In short, to tell the story that, due to security reasons, could not be fully told before now.

Genesis. On July 4, 1950, a $7\frac{1}{2}$-kilowatt, mobile shortwave-broadcast transmitter, code-named Barbara, went on the air with programs in Czech and Slovak from a secret location in the woods of southern Bavaria, near the Czech/German frontier. Calling itself Radio Free Europe (RFE), it was to become America's most successful black-radio operation. The station, which was funded by the newly formed Central Intelligence Agency, began a hard-hitting campaign intended to roll back the Iron Curtain and liberate the peoples of East Europe from Communist domination.

The decision to fund a clandestine anti-Communist radio station had been made a year and a half before, following the overthrow of the Czech government by the Communists. The CIA had come into existence during the summer of 1947, with the passage of the National Security Act. Originally envisioned as an intelligence-gathering organization, the role of the CIA quickly expanded to include other functions, one of which was the dissemination of disinformation.

In 1948 President Truman had appointed a three-man commission to evaluate the operation of the CIA. One of these men was Allen W. Dulles, a firm believer in broadly expanded operations for the CIA, including undercover political and military activities. After the presidential election of 1948, Dulles reported to President Truman, proposing the inauguration of covert radio operations beamed behind the Iron Curtain and aimed at counter-revolution within the Soviet bloc.

In February 1949, within weeks of Dulles's recommendation, preliminary discussions were held, which led to the formation, in May of that year, of the National Committee for a Free Europe (NCFE), and its subsidiary, Radio Free Europe. Allen Dulles, who in 1951 was to become the Deputy Director of the CIA, and its Director in 1953, was the first President of the NCFE. Exiled anti-Communist nationals from East European RFE-target countries were

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recruited. Among its first employees were high-ranking former government officials, ex-diplomats, statesmen, authors, and other prominent individuals.

Radio Liberty. In 1951 a sister organization was formed. Calling itself the American Committee for the Liberation of the Peoples of the USSR, AmComLib, as it would come to be called, was a lower profile operation from the outset. There were many reasons for keeping this service under wraps, including the vastness of the Soviet Union, the many ethnic divisions within it, and the fact that because the USSR lay at the very heart and soul of Communism, AmComLib was to be a much harder hitting organization.

Radio Liberation, the shortwave broadcasting arm of AmComLib, went on the air from a transmitter site in Germany in March 1953. Within minutes of its first broadcast, heavy jamming started, and it would not end for 35 years. Until RFE and Radio Liberation, later called Radio Liberty, then RL for short, merged in 1975, the two organizations were funded from the same CIA sources, and maintained as separate entities.

Radio Free Europe was the first secretly funded CIA political operation, and to assure adequate cover for the organization, a division of the NCFE, called the Radio Free Europe Fund, was set up to raise money from private contributions. In the almost 40 years the RFE Fund existed, private contributions never amounted to more than five percent of the total RFE budget.

The station was directed from CIA headquarters in Washington, D.C., in a division called Policy and Planning, East Europe (PPEE), and several dozen PPEE officials were transferred to RFE, both to its main office in Munich, Germany, as well as to its New York City headquarters. Radio Liberty was also directed from different locations in both Munich and New York City. The organizations maintained these headquarters for 21 years, during which period they expanded steadily. In 1971, what had been a poorly kept secret became public knowledge: CIA ties were well publicized, and pressure began to mount to terminate both RFE and RL, which were referred to by Senator William Fulbright as "relics of the cold war."

During the first six years of its operation, until the ill-fated Hungarian revolution in 1956, RFE hit hard and often at the twin themes of Communist oppression and tyranny. The station's first day of programming was chosen to coincide with America's Independence Day, to remind its listeners of the long history of man's struggle for freedom. On Bastille Day, July 14, 1950, RFE expanded its programming. This day is known to Europeans as a celebration of the spirit of freedom.

Radio Free Europe's first transmitter, a 7½-watt mobile transmitter code-named Barbara, operated on the Czechoslovak–West-German border.

Jamming. The Communists jammed Radio Free Europe Czechoslovak and Bulgarian broadcasts from the day they went on the air until the cessation of jamming in late 1988 and early 1989. All Radio Liberty broadcasts, including Russian, Ukrainian, and 15 other nationality languages of the Soviet Union were jammed from their first days in the early 1950s until the cessation of jamming of all languages of the Soviet Union on November 29, 1988.

In the field of international broadcasting, the term "jamming—causing deliberate interference to a broadcast by transmitting noise on the same frequency in order to make reception impossible—is well known to shortwave listeners, because even today some jamming continues. The People's Republic of China, for example, jams some broadcasts of the Voice of America, as well as those of Radio Free Asia. Jamming noises are intended not only to prevent reception, but also to make listening so annoying that even attempts to listen are discouraged. In the early days of jamming the noise was created mechanically and transmitted via recordings. As jamming, particularly from the Soviet Union, became more sophisticated, jammers transmitted "white noise," which was produced electronically, and covered the entire range of the audio spectrum. And with the increased sophistication of the system, the number of jamming transmitters increased, as well. At its peak, the Soviet jamming network consisted of between 2,500 and 3,000 transmitters, ranging in power from 20 kW to more than 100 kW.

Although jamming was clearly a means of censoring material that the Communists wanted to keep

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away from their people, it was recognized early in the development of the Soviet jamming system that it was also a potentially powerful military weapon. In the period after World War II, most military communications were carried on shortwave, and the Soviet jamming system, if turned against an enemy, could clearly disrupt communications between and among enemy military forces. It was therefore, decided that it was in the United States interests to learn as much as possible about the Soviet system.

Keeping East and West separate was deadly business for the East. Here border guards are laying mines along the Austria–Hungary border.

The Technical Evaluation Advisory Committee (TEAC). In the 1950s, after RFE and RL were established and expanding, the Soviet jamming system was growing exponentially. Radio Liberty carried Russian and 16 nationality languages, which many of us hadn't even heard of, including Tatar Bashkir, Turkmen, Kazakh, Kirghiz, Tadjik, Uzbek, and others. To cover those, the Soviets were required to build jamming-transmitter stations throughout the Soviet Union, as well as in some of its satellites. Furthermore, in order to provide an effective jammer network, they had to have extensive monitoring of the unwanted transmissions, as well as command and control centers that could call up jamming transmitters as they were needed to cover a particular language in a particular area. In order for them to know which jamming transmitters were being heard in any given target area, they developed a system of "Idents", two letter call signals in International Morse Code that were transmitted roughly every minute.

The "ident" AR, for example, was located in the Moscow area. How did we know this? Primarily by "df-ing"—using direction finding equipment to lock onto the jamming transmitter from at least two different distant locations, and triangulating onto the jammer site. In the 1950s we did not have satellite reconnaissance to spot large transmitter complexes from space, and the work had to be done by direction finding and triangulating, or by having people inside who drove around the countryside with a shortwave receiver trying to locate jamming stations.

Each jammer complex carried with it a unique "ident" that was specific only to a single location. Jamming centers in the East European satellite countries were identified by a letter-number or a number-letter "Ident." For example, the "ident" L7 was located near Sofia, Bulgaria.

The "idents" were required for Soviet monitors. Located at literally scores of crucial points within the Soviet orbit, they listened to every hostile frequency carrying broadcasts earmarked for jamming. If they were able to hear an unwanted program, they communicated with jammer locations thought capable of providing signals strong enough to interfere with the hostile programs. If one location was not providing enough jamming, they called in another, and, if necessary, another, until the program was obliterated.

Some of us in the West established technical monitoring stations to determine how well we were doing. Full-time technical monitoring posts were set up on the periphery of our target areas. They listened to our broadcasts, every language, every frequency, every hour of the day. In addition, those monitors, who were generally amateur-radio operators and knew International Morse Code, were required to report to us any interference to our broadcasts, whether it was from another broadcaster (unintentional interference),or jamming (deliberate interference). They were also required to log all "idents." Such logs provided extensive and very valuable information about the makeup and distribution of the Soviet and satellite jamming system.

In order to make the most of the information contained in those monitoring logs, the Technical Evaluation Advisory Committee (TEAC) was created. It consisted of a Chairman and Vice-Chairman (both CIA people), representatives from the broadcasters (VOA, RL, and RFE—the latter represented by the author), a team of radio-propagation specialists from the Commerce Department, and several observers. We met weekly at CIA headquarters, went over all the monitoring data that had been analyzed the previous week, and began to prepare "Top-Secret" maps of the jamming system. Each week or two we selected several "idents," and had monitoring stations with direction-finding equipment look at these idents every hour. Generally, at least three, sometimes many more, direction-finding stations reported regularly.

In a matter of a few years, we had detailed maps showing where each jamming complex was located. In the event of war, those locations were high on the list of priority targets. Later on, we also began to

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obtain aerial (low-altitude and earth-satellite) photos of those stations, and we were able to determine how many antennas were located at each complex, what their characteristics were, and in what direction their energy was being radiated.

Eventually, the Soviets got wind of what we were doing, and in the mid-1960s they began to change the "idents" every two weeks. By then it was too late; the direction-finding stations had increased, satellite photos were taken routinely, and we had pretty much precisely pinpointed every jammer complex throughout the Soviet empire.

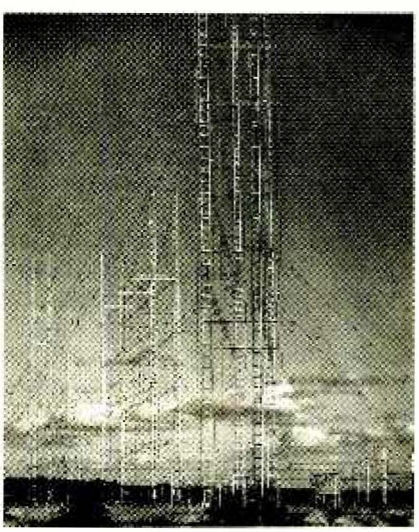
The Winds Of Freedom. The activities of the NCFE were not limited to radio broadcasting alone. In 1951, The Winds of Freedom project was inaugurated. Two thousand helium-inflated weather balloons, carrying more than two million leaflets, were launched into Communist territory from a location near the German-Czech border. The prevailing winds carried those balloons aloft over Czech territory. When the balloons reached an altitude of about 30,000 feet, they burst, releasing their cargo of leaflets.

The idea had been proposed by Allen Dulles, who had read of a similar exploit by the Russians over Yugoslavia in 1948. The operation was organized in a division of NCFE, the Free Europe Press, which was responsible for the dissemination of printed anti-Communist propaganda oriented toward RFE's East-European target countries. The first balloon was launched on August 13, 1951, and the first leaflets carried the following message to the citizens of Czechoslovakia:

To the People of Czechoslovakia:
A new wind is blowing.
A new hope is stirring.
Friends of freedom in other lands have found a new way to reach you.
They know that you also want freedom.
Millions of free men and women have joined together and are sending you this message of freedom, which in the upper air always blows from West to East.
An oppressor has brought slavery to your proud country.
He has tried to cut you off completely from your friends in the free world. But he has failed.
We are in touch with you daily by radio.
Now, we take this new way of extending our hand to you.
There is no dungeon deep enough to hide the truth, no wall high enough to keep out the message of freedom.
Tyranny cannot control the winds, cannot enslave your hearts.
Freedom will rise again!

The project was an enormous success, and by 1954 regular launching had been inaugurated into Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland. Those leaflets were primarily small newspapers published twice weekly, giving news of the goings on in the Free World, and carrying anti-Communist propaganda.

Because of their vulnerability to the leaflet barrages, and the popularity of the leaflets among the populace, the Communists carried out violent attacks on the balloon operation. MIG jets were routinely sent up to shoot as many balloons down as possible; protests were sent by the Communist bloc through diplomatic channels; campaigns among the youth were organized to locate and confiscate the leaflets. Two sabotage missions were attempted. Communist agents were sent to blow up the balloon launching sites. But Western agents got wind of the plots and thwarted them. The Soviets even claimed that the balloons carried germs, explosive charges, and incendiary pellets.



To overcome jamming, high-gain, highly directional, curtain-antenna arrays like this one in Gloria, Portugal were used.

After making numerous veiled threats to RL employees, the Soviets acted: During 1954, two RL employees in Munich were assassinated. A Russian, Leonid Karas, was found drowned in a local river under mysterious circumstances. A little more than six months later the head of the RL Azerbaijan service was found shot to death. The perpetrators of these crimes have not been found to this day.

The turning point in the Winds of Freedom project came in the winter of 1955, when balloon-launched leaflets carried a message from the enormously popular President Eisenhower, which said, in part, that "the American people share your faith that right in the end will prevail to bring you once again among the free nations of the world."

The leaflets were hurting the Communists more and more, and something had to be done. In January 1956 the Soviets, who had thus far remained in the background, got into the act. They protested vehemently that Soviet air space had been violated by RFE balloons, and that unless something were done, retaliatory measures would be taken, since the balloons constituted a threat to commercial air traffic. Shortly afterward, a Czech airliner crashed in the Tarta mountains, killing 22 people. The Czechs immediately sent a strongly worded protest to Washington, blaming the crash on the balloons. Unconfirmed reports in some Western circles held that Soviet MIGs had shot down the Czechoslovak airliner to provoke a confrontation. The Czech government and the Soviets were planning to protest the balloons in the United Nations, and the CIA learned that there was a plan afoot to cut off all Berlin air corri-

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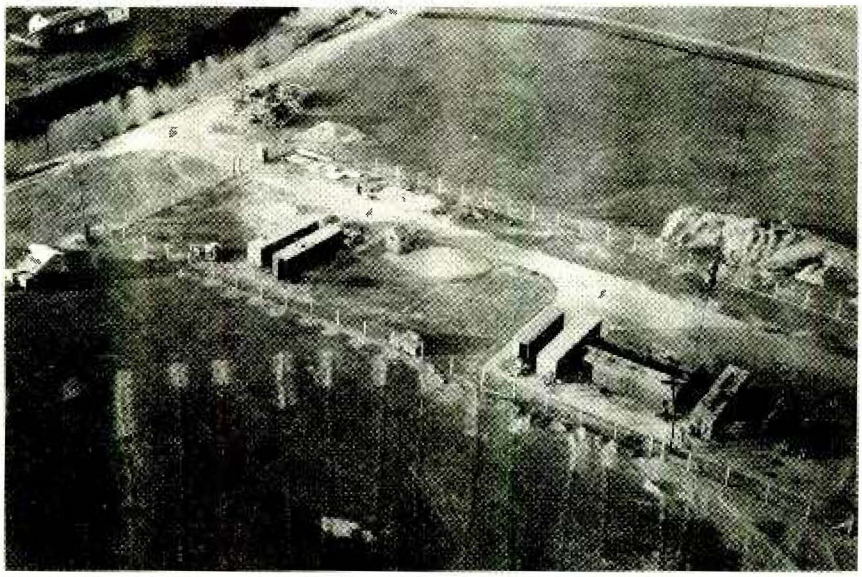
dors because of the claimed danger to air traffic from the balloons. There was a distinct possibility, therefore, that continued escalation could lead to World War III.

In February 1956, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, brother of the CIA Director, reluctantly terminated all U.S.-sponsored balloon flights, but not before some heated debate within the National Security Council. The Winds of Freedom had been one of the most successful CIA operations, and it was not without considerable regret that the project was finally canceled.



This 50-kilowatt mobile transmitter, code named Eagle, failed in its mission in Europe, but was later used successfully to broadcast to Cuba, and in Vietnam.

In all, more than half a million balloons were launched toward the East. They had carried some 300 million leaflets and newspapers to readers behind the Iron Curtain. Approximately 40-million cubic feet of helium gas had been consumed during the project.

The Hungarian Revolution. The year 1956 marked another major turning point in the history of Radio Free Europe. In October, violent and widespread demonstrations broke out in Hungary, and in a short time, a full-scale revolution erupted. Ultimately, the Soviets sent in several armored divisions, and a blood bath ensued. The uprising was suppressed, but a storm of protests erupted. It was widely held that the broadcasts of Radio Free Europe had encouraged the Hungarian freedom fighters with promises of Western military assistance. After investigations by the German government, as well as an internal probe, RFE was exonerated, but a controversy continued about RFE's role in the ill-fated uprising. Crucial tape recordings of some of the RFE Hungarian programs carried during the revolution were never found.

A footnote to the enigma emerged in September of 1996, when documents were released in Budapest at a conference on historians' access to cold-war documents. Among the documents from Budapest, Moscow, and Washington was a memorandum from a CIA advisor which noted that a broadcast carried on October 27, 1956 "fairly clearly implied that foreign aid would be forthcoming if the resistance forces succeeded."

It was the failure of the Hungarian uprising that led to major changes both in RFE and RL broadcast policy, which ultimately led to making those stations among the most respected, authoritative, and effective broadcasters in the world. It had become apparent to CIA and Department of State policy makers that the Soviets would not tolerate the overthrow of Communism either within its own borders, or within those of its East-European satellites, and that carrying material that would in any way encourage overthrowing Communism would not be in the interests of the United States.

An official CIA paper issued directives to RFE and RL executives outlining guidelines that, in essence, dictated changes in programming objectives. Program policy would henceforth support change by reform rather than by revolution. The stations were to bring listeners comprehensive, accurate, uncensored news and commentary not available inside the Iron Curtain by any other medium. They were to become, in essence, home services in exile, and were referred to thereafter as surrogate broadcasters. As an adjunct to the changes made in the organizations, the name of Radio Liberation was changed to Radio Liberty.

In their heyday, the stations were the most popular and most listened to Western broadcasters in their target areas, which included Russia, 16 Soviet Republics, and five East-European countries. (Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, and Romania). In the 1980s, long after the CIA connection had been severed, the RFE/RL network consisted of one medium-wave and 54 shortwave transmitters, at six sites in Germany, Spain, and Portugal. From the modest beginning of a single 7½-kilowatt transmitter, total power in its prime exceeded 12,500 kilowatts—enough to supply electricity to a medium-sized city.

The Eagle That Became A Swan. In 1953, Radio Free Europe put a 50-kilowatt, mobile, medium-wave transmitter on the air. That added to its growing complement of shortwave transmitters, which were now operating from two sites in Germany, and one near Lisbon, Portugal. There already was one medium wave transmitter operating near Munich, Germany. The second medium-wave transmitter was intended to give the organization more flexibility, because a mobile transmitter would be capable of moving along the border of Czechoslovakia, or could even be moved to another country.

The transmitter was housed in a van, and its operation was ill-fated from the start. The frequency cho-

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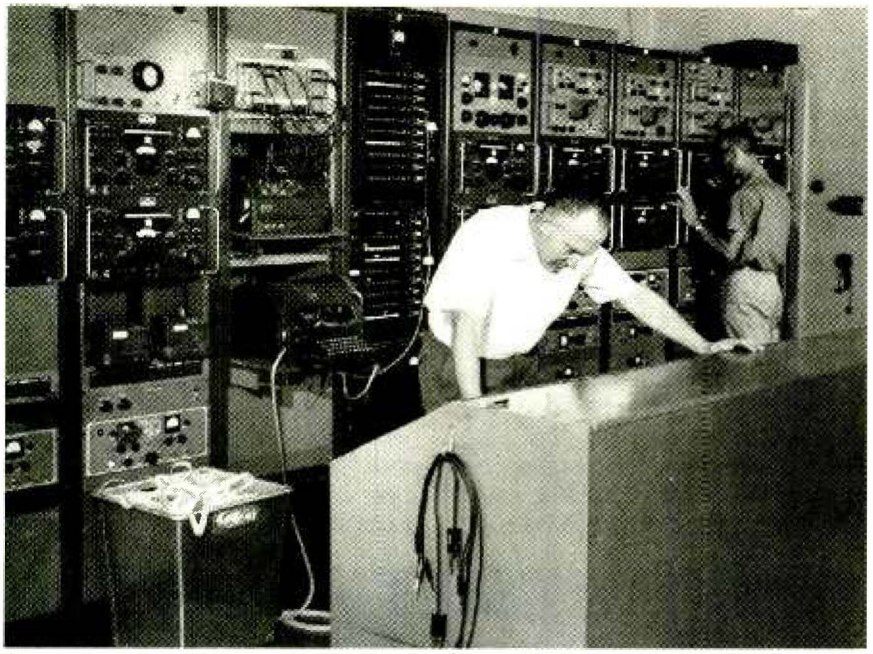

Monitoring stations, like this one in Schleissheim, Germany, kept tabs on the goings-on behind the Iron Curtain.

sen for its broadcasts was 854 kHz, which was the primary frequency of Radio Bucharest. That frequency had been used with low power by the Armed Forces Network (AFN) in Berlin, and some high-level negotiations were required to get the station to agree to dropping the frequency so that RFE could use it. AFN moved to another frequency, and almost immediately began complaining that coverage was not as good as it had been previously on 854 kHz.

Mutual interference between RFE and Radio Bucharest was severe, and what the powerful Bucharest transmitter didn't take out, jamming by the Czechs did. Sharp protests from the Romanian Government to the United States, and to Germany, which had recently signed a treaty with the United States, forced RFE to shut the transmitter down.

For a while it was hoped that the transmitter, code named Eagle, could be moved to another location outside Germany, but the prospects of finding another host government, or, for that matter, a suitable frequency, were hopeless, and the project was abandoned. In 1956, after the shutdown of Eagle, the transmitter was quietly shipped to the free port of Bremen, where it remained in storage for several years, until one of the chief Latin American policy planners in the CIA thought it would be useful to move the transmitter into the Caribbean and inaugurate a black-radio operation beamed toward Cuba. Thus, Radio Americas was born.

Eagle, still inside its van, was shipped to Swan Island, where it began operating against Castro's Cuba. It remained in service for some eight years, during which time it was a prime communications link into the Communist island, sometimes carrying messages to friends inside. The transmitter was then moved to Vietnam, where it conducted clandestine operations until the end of the war. While in Vietnam, the transmitter operated from an airplane, and was often referred to as The Blue Eagle.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stanley Leinwoll has been involved in shortwave broadcasting for nearly half a century. He worked for the Voice of America from 1952–1957 when he joined Radio Free Europe. In 1975 he became Director of Engineering for both Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, continuing in that capacity until his retirement in 1993. Since then he was worked as a shortwave broadcasting consultant to private U.S. broadcasters.

Mr. Leinwoll has served on five United States Delegations to International World Administrative Radio Conferences; he has also written hundreds of technical articles, and his ten published books include *From Spark to Satellite—A History Of Wireless Communication*, *Shortwave Propagation*, *Space Communications*, and *Understanding Lasers and Masers*.

The Poison Plot. One of the more bizarre episodes involving RFE is generally referred to as "the poison plot." From the birth of the Radios onward, threats and intimidation were commonplace. The communists did everything they could to frighten RFE and RL employees.

The inside story of the "plot" was told by a former Major in Czech intelligence, who defected in 1968 when the Soviets invaded Czechoslovakia during the "Prague Spring." He had been involved in nearly 14 years of espionage activity. The idea had been dreamed up in the late 1950s by a vice consul in the Czech consulate in Salzburg, Austria. His scheme was to slip atropine into the salt shakers in the RFE canteen in Munich. Atropine can cause anything from diarrhea to death, depending on the quantity ingested.

What the Czechs did not know was that the man assigned the mission of putting atropine in the salt shakers was a double agent whose primary allegiance was to the CIA. Afraid that the atropine would harm some RFE employees, the agent blew his own cover by alerting RFE officials, who promptly advised German authorities. Although the agent had placed some atropine in the salt shakers, it was scarcely enough to cause more than mild stomach upsets in a number of RFE employees. The exposure of the plot resulted in a mad scramble by the Czechs to prevent the arrest of one of their most productive operatives in Germany, who happened to serve as contact man for the double agent.

One of Czechoslovakia's top intelligence officers entered Germany to bring his agent out. The agent was spirited out of the country in a wild automobile ride just as the German police were about to close in on him.

An RFE Scoop. The Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty news-gathering structure was the most sophisticated and comprehensive

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in the West. Information gathering consisted of reports from various bureaus and news services throughout the world; the stations subscribed to newspapers and periodicals from all Communist capitals. Those were read and analyzed daily, reports were prepared and provided not only to each language service, but to the CIA representative in Munich as well. The average daily intake at the Central News Room in Munich was over one million words; in addition, close to 100 Communist radio stations were monitored daily, using advanced receiving antennas to pull in some of the more distant stations. Copies of RFE and RL analyses were also provided to other major broadcasting organizations including the BBC and VOA.

It was the work of the RFE monitoring network that led to major reforms in Poland late in 1970. A few minutes before midnight on December 15, 1970 a 52 year-old native of Poland was monitoring a Polish radio station at a site in Germany when there was a sudden interruption in the program and a bulletin announcing that rioting had occurred in Gdansk. What the RFE monitor heard was the first official word from Poland that violent demonstrations had taken place and that a curfew had been imposed by the Communists.

RFE immediately began carrying reports of the rioting, and by giving full and complete coverage to the stories during the days that followed, fueled further uprisings in other parts of Poland, which eventually led to the overthrow of the Polish Communist Chief, Ladislaw Gomulka. The Polish authorities were so desperate to keep the news of the riots from the people that they took transmitters normally used in Radio Poland's international shortwave service and re-scheduled them on RFE frequencies in an effort to jam the broadcasts. RFE's Polish programs had previously been clear of jamming.

An Ineffective Double Agent. The Communist governments to whom RFE/RL directed its broadcasts periodically attempted to infiltrate Munich headquarters with spies. By and large those missions failed, because very few RFE/RL employees were privy to the inner secrets of the organization. The employees who had such knowledge first had to go through detailed security checks, and were required to sign documents agreeing not to divulge any information about the organization. My own security checks included clearance up to and including "Top Secret." In addition, I received a special clearance after being briefed at CIA headquarters. The letters describing this clearance are themselves classified, and since they have no bearing on this story, will not be divulged here.

Radio Free Europe's central news room.

In the jargon of the CIA, a person who has been given detailed information is said to be "witting", and very few, if indeed any, foreign nationals working for the station were "witting." Consequently, spy missions by Communist agents infiltrating either RFE or RL frequently failed, and in the end they had to make up their own stories. In 1971, for example, one such spying mission was intended to get RFE and RL out of West Germany, where the Radios not only had their headquarters, but three transmitter sites, as well.

Andrei Czechowicz, a 34-year old Polish national, had been planted in RFE's news room since 1965. Czechowicz was actually a captain in Polish intelligence, but in six years in Munich, he learned nothing about the organization that had not already been printed in the newspapers.

Believing the time to be ripe for a campaign against RFE, the Polish spy was recalled to Warsaw, where he held a series of unconvincing news conferences and made three unimpressive appearances on Polish TV. The consensus among Poles who watched and listened to what Czechowicz had to say was that they didn't know what all the fuss was about, and, in fact, the publicity resulted in more than the usual number of listeners tuning in to RFE to determine for themselves what was going on.

The recall of the Polish captain was part of a big push against RFE, which included protests to the German government, and a threat by the Polish and Hungarian regimes that unless something were done about RFE they would withdraw from the 1972 Olympic Games, which were to be held in Munich.

The West-German government, which, under the leadership of Willie Brandt, had been attempting to build bridges to the East, was caught in the middle. What to do? Chancellor Brandt notified top U. S.

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officials that he did not intend to renew the licenses of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty in Germany. President Nixon had been, and continued to be, a staunch supporter of the Radios, and he advised Brandt that if Germany failed to renew the licenses of RFE and RL he would withdraw all U.S. troops from Germany.

The licenses were renewed.

As a result of President Nixon's strong support, a secret compromise agreement was reached concerning the journalistic status of the Radios. During the 1972 Olympic Games, the Radios would carry only sports and music programs, and refrain entirely from anything that could be interpreted as political.

A Little Espionage On The Side. Communist charges of CIA involvement in RFE and RL were, of course, true, and the fact is that the organizations were engaged in activities that extended beyond the pale of surrogate radio. Station employees who were members of the CIA were involved in escape networks that aided Soviet and East-European residents who wanted to leave the Communist bloc. Employees in Munich maintained close contact with some residents inside to obtain information, and some members of the Communist press were on the CIA payroll, the purpose being, again, to obtain information.

Still another aspect of the organization's activities involved the questioning of Communist tourists while on holiday or business trips to the West. Trained CIA agents posing as poll takers, interviewed visitors from the East, ostensibly to determine their radio listening habits, but, in reality, they were highly attuned to the possibilities of defection, and, in cases where such tendencies were detected, to encourage such acts.

RFE And RL Officially Surface. In early 1971, Senator Clifford Case of New Jersey officially brought CIA financing of RFE and RL out in the open. Debate over the future of the Radios continued for several years, and two commissions were set up to study the effectiveness of the organizations.

The decision was made in 1973 to merge both Radios under a single Board—the Board for International Broadcasting (BIB), and by 1975 a single president of both Radios was named. Funding was to be through Congress, which would provide grants to the BIB, which would then be responsible for oversight of RFE/RL.

Another Assassination, And A Bombing. Although CIA funding of RFE and RL ended in 1971 the stations continued to grow in stature and were an increasing influence on Communist governments in East Europe and the Soviet Union. In 1969 a prominent Bulgarian writer, Georgi Markov, defected to Great Britain. The well-known novelist and playwright was a favorite of the Bulgarian President, Todor Zhivkov. On his arrival in London, Markov began to write his memoirs, which were broadcast weekly by Radio Free Europe, reaching an estimated half of the Bulgarian population. Those memoirs repeatedly called attention to the corruption within the Bulgarian Communist party, and of its President, who was totally controlled by Moscow.

Markov was repeatedly warned that if he did not stop writing for Radio Free Europe he would be killed. In 1978, while walking on a London bridge, he was attacked by an assassin who used the tip of an umbrella to inject a deadly poison, ricin, into his leg. He died four days later, but it was six months before a top-secret British chemical and germ warfare unit was able to determine the cause of death.

In early 1981, a group of Swiss, East-German, Hungarian, and Czech terrorists planted a powerful bomb consisting of plastic explosives along an outside wall near the RFE Czechoslovak service. The concussion was heard throughout Munich, and windows half a mile away were shattered. Fortunately, the bomb was set off in the late evening of a Saturday night, and casualties were kept to a minimum. Extensive investigations at the time failed to provide information about the bombing, and it was not until recently, after an examination of the files of the former East-German intelligence agency, known as "STASI", was conducted, that details of the bombing were unearthed. The bombing reflected intense Communist hostility toward Radio Free Europe, which continued until the fall of Communism.

To some extent, hostility toward RFE and RL continues to this day.

What The Future Holds. Toward the end of 1993, Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, and the Voice of America were combined within the United States Information Agency under a single Board of Directors. The combined entity is called the International Broadcasting Bureau (IBB). A power struggle ensued within the IBB almost immediately. Seventeen top engineers of RFE/RL resigned; three primary RFE/RL transmitter sites were either shut down entirely, or mothballed. A Voice of America transmitter site in the United States was shut down. Some languages were cut entirely, and all others were sharply cut back. Listenership has suffered, with sharp declines being observed in virtually all RFE and RL languages. VOA services have suffered, as well.

The keywords of the 1990s have become budget-balancing and downsizing. There are many who feel that those proud and historic Radios have served their purpose, and that there is no longer a need for surrogate broadcasting. Perhaps they are correct, and as listenership continues to decline in the face of more stringent economic measures the popularity of RFE and RL decreases almost daily, as they drift inexorably toward their place in history.

An era has ended. Ω

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